Jupiter's Dreamtime

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There Was a Time, O Best Beloved...

A time when you didn't know when dinner would be, let alone tea or toast. There was a time when you slept outside on the cool, hard ground, and ran wild and lithe through tall grass in persuit of furred and feathered prey. I wonder how much of it you remember fondly-- I'd miss the creek and the croak-croak-croaking of frogs if I were you. I'd miss the challenge of hunting and the smell of sunbaked grass.

A few years ago you followed me home. You let me catch you up in my arms, kissing and cooing at you. You let me feed you dinner and brush your soft, inky fur. You let me pick the burs and thorns from your paws without any scratching or meowling. You ate your fill of fancy tinned fish from H-Mart and went to bed on the living room rug, which was the softest thing you'd felt in your whole life.

Now when I see you sleeping in bed, legs kicking, I wonder which life you dream of.

The fish in the creek are small, but plentiful. I've seen crawdads and little killifish, minnows and shiners. I buy you minnows by the pound so you have something familliar to eat. On more than one occasion I've collected scuds in a jar for your pensive contemplation. I see your tail twitch-twitch-twitching, and delight in the flicking of your lovely ears.

I think you dream of massive escaped goldfishh-- gleaming carp the size of volkswagens.

Your biggest prey now, are house spiders and our ankles, I'm afraid.

Sometimes I have dreams of your life before we met. I'm always looking for you in my old house-- you're small and kittenish, always in trouble. I search every cabinet and drawer until I find you.

A few times you've woken me up by lunging for a bird out the window. I'll be dozing, just dimly aware of how you tense...

Coiling...
W a t c h i n g . . .
W a i t i n g . . . .

...before you launch yourself into the double-paned glass.

Once, I had the window open. I had been dead asleep, but still somehow caught you by your tail as you went sailing by. I pulled you back before either one of us knew what happened. We both sat there, shuddering. You hadn't known about the two-story drop onto the pavement.

Perhaps in your dreams, you fly.

You're my darling, my dearest, the apple of my eye. My hunter and my bedbug, my dirty-dish-licking, always-talking, plump-and-perfect baby. When we first met, I warned you not to stay.

I said "I'll give you a terrible and silly name, and you'll never be rid of me. You can't come in here unless you promise to stay and let me love you."

True to our promise, you've stayed.
True to our promise, as long as I'm living, my baby you'll be.

Let me tell you about the most Beautiful Boy in the World: my Jupiter, Universally Adored!

This is a storybook about and for my former street cat, Jupiter. He ran himself ragged as a stray, and now my greatest pleasure is spoiling him rotten (very, very, dreadfully rotten).

This volume was written and illustrated in 2025. The final words are drawn from a favorite childhood book of mine, "Love you Forever" by Robert Munsch. "I'll love you forever, I'll like you for always, as long as I'm living my baby you'll be."

Pets can be trouble-- and my Jupiter is trouble! Yet I love him from the tip of his nose to the tip of his toes.

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